



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

May 15, 2009

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

Mickey's Blog: The Mother of All Free Agent Signings

Yer gonna get it **Wait 'til Mom Gets Home**

I had been brooding for months.

My mother, Nancy, had left Roseville, my lifelong home.

She had been spirited away by my baby brother Matthew, and was living in *Babylonian Captivity* in Clinton Township behind the Partridge Creek Mall.

She sold the Switalski ancestral home on Martin Road, built by my late father, Norbert, some 45 years ago.

I couldn't argue with the logic of the move. In fact, I supported it. Nancy was 83. The house was a two-story, four-bedroom colonial. She lived there alone, and her bedroom was on the second floor while the laundry was in the basement. Nancy's knees were shot from years of hand-delivering my political literature. Her kids, myself included, had all grown up and moved out. So it made perfect sense when one day she casually mentioned that she was contemplating downsizing.

Matt swooped in. He and his wife Rebecca were building a new house in tony Partridge Creek. They finished off the basement into a luxurious lower flat, complete with private entrance, a full kitchen, and bath. It even had windows. They quickly enticed my mother into their home, with the added bonus of being with her two grandchildren, Gianna, 3, and Sophia, 1.

My devious brother had executed a deft *fait accompli*. Nancy had left the 'ville and was ensconced in splendor in the nether regions of a Northern Clinton Township McMansion.

I accepted Matt's sophisticated kidnapping with outward indifference.

Inwardly, it didn't sit right with me. I kept my own counsel and secretly plotted my mother's return. After all, Nancy had lived in Roseville for over 50 years. My universe would be out of sync until she returned.

I unleashed my master plan patiently, unobtrusively, to allay any possible suspicions. I would invite my mother to late night parties at my house, ply her with bourbon and cokes, and then insist that she not drive home. After all, I had a comfortable four-bedroom colonial myself, in Roseville, and with only me, my wife Roma, and son Liam, we had two spare bedrooms.

I invited her to spend holiday weekends at the house, and she occasionally accepted.

After months of laying the groundwork, I told her I enjoyed having her around. I casually suggested that she move in.

Nancy, playing hard to get, was non-committal. But I may have overplayed my hand. The word was out, and Matt became aware of my designs.

The competition began a new phase.

The race was on to sign the *Greatest Free Agent* in history.

Forget about A-Rod. Forget about C.C. Sabathia.

This free agent was Nancy Ann McDonnell, out of Salina, Kansas, graduate of Marymount College, Majorette, mother of 7, former Roseville Councilwoman, the "Super-Sub" teacher at Roseville High School, pianist, bon vivant and matriarch of the Switalski Clan. Still gainfully employed at *Nickel and Saph Insurance* and scourge of her monthly Bridge Club.

Attempts to reach an accommodation with her current "team" were inconclusive. I refused to pay Matt's insistent demands for severance fees.

"She's a free agent," I bellowed. "I am not buying out her contract from you. She can sign with anyone she pleases."

Tensions mounted. Ever resourceful, Matt started coaching his two beautiful daughters, Gianna and Sophia. "Tell Grandma you want her to stay here forever," he cooed, using unscrupulous guilt-trip tactics.

My position was eroding.

Matt's insidious tactics were working. I had to put together a lucrative package, even if I had to give away the store. As my friend Bruno Fuciarelli once told me: "You can have many *wives*, but there is only one *mama*."

Luckily, I wouldn't be losing my wife over this one. Roma was in full support of the acquisition. She loves my ma, but at times I suspected that her motives were not entirely pure.

In fact, she smelled blood.

As we put together our incentive package, my wife kept inserting home makeover projects that I had successfully delayed or vetoed for years. “We need new carpeting on the steps,” she observed. “Otherwise your mother might slip.”

I nodded.

“We should get new windows,” she warned. “It might be drafty for Nancy.”

To keep a united front, I now had to accede to Roma’s demands. She saw our bid for Nancy as an opportunity to get the *new kitchen* she had lusted after for years.

Awakened by a nightmare, I sat up in bed, alone in the darkness, drenched in sweat. Do you have *any idea* what a *new kitchen* costs?

I had no choice but to agree.

There was something in this for everybody. Even my son, Liam, wrangled a TV in his bedroom, since he would no longer be able to monopolize the family room TV, programmed to some obscure European soccer games, for 18 hours a day.

At this rate, soon it would be *me* relegated to the basement. I schemed to offer my *Spectacular Bid* without further delay.

One night, after Sunday Family Dinner, I ordered the women and children upstairs and Matt, Nancy and I sat down at mom’s kitchen table for some hard bargaining on *final status* negotiations. I had to move quickly and decisively, lest my four thieving sisters get wind of these machinations and attempt to lure my mother to one of *their homes* out of state. Clinton Township was one thing. Maryland, Rhode Island or Florida was completely unacceptable.

I began confidently, laying out a lucrative package of benefits.

“First of all, mom, I think you should be in Roseville. You’ve lived your whole life there. All your friends are there. You still go to church there. People there are always asking me about you. They miss you.”

From under the table, I cued the soft violins with the CD remote.

“But here’s what I have to offer,” I continued, picking up the pace. “When you walk in my front door, immediately to your right is the living room and attached dining room. They are spacious, with newly finished wood floors and the bulk of my *Gonzo* art collection. All this is yours, to do whatever you want with. That’s your apartment. You have a door to the kitchen, and I have procured the antique French Doors from *Phil’s Pharmacy* in Mount Clemens, courtesy of my friend, Pat Chownyk. I will install them according to your specifications at the entrance from the front hall. That is your space and you can have privacy there whenever you want it.”

“But there is more,” I added. “Upstairs, you get the *Yellow Bedroom*, which is the largest bedroom in the house, complete with walk-in closet.”

“That is in addition,” I reminded her triumphantly, “to your suite of rooms downstairs, to which we will install your own cable outlet.”

I glanced at Matt. He was turning white.

“Did I mention,” I added brusquely, “that you get a parking spot in the garage, and it’s the one closest to the door?” Left unsaid was the fact that Matt had mom parking on the street, like a common lodger.

You need allies in putting together an attractive package, and we’d left no stone unturned. “Our next-door neighbors, Shelly and Joe Boedeker, are due to have their baby this summer,” I continued. “Shelly will bring the wee boy around for a walk in our high pram. And she says she will serve you wine whenever you want in their hot tub.”

“*Bourbon and Coke!*” Nancy blurted out.

It was the signal I needed. I now moved in for the *coup de grace*.

“Finally, I offer this all to you *rent-free*.”

My spies had discovered that Matt was secretly charging my mother rent.

“That’s just utility money,” protested Matt defensively.

“Whatever,” I shrugged. “You don’t have to pay utilities with me, either.”

The jig was up.

Matt threw his hands up into the air, a pained look of betrayal on his face. “I can’t compete with that,” he cried.

I could tell I’d won. The only thing left was to assure mom she wouldn’t be hurting Matt and Rebecca’s feelings by signing with me. Plus it was time for me to salvage a few scraps from the negotiations.

“I require only that you make dinner once a week,” I observed, “and Sunday Dinner doesn’t count.” Even after being showered with goodies, everyone likes to know their talents are appreciated.

“And I must admit I have my own purposes in wanting you to live with me,” I confided. “I have made my decision about what I am going to do when my term expires at the end of 2010. I need you mom, to help me. You can do my correspondence. You love doing that and you are good at it. Take this one last journey with me? I really need you.”

“See!” Matt rallied, accusingly. “He’s going to make you work 65 hours a week without pay!”

“Not a minute more than 56 hours,” I countered. “Seriously, Mom, I need you. Will you help me?”

She had to say yes.

Because at the end of the day, I love my mother, and she loves me. Nancy moves in with us this month. It’s like the Fat Man told Sam Spade. “If you lose a son, you can get another. But there is only one *Maltese Falcon*.”

Mickey's Ends and Notes

STATE BUDGET UPDATE

In the face of harsh economic realities, the state must fundamentally change the way government operates. Earlier this month, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees approved an Executive Order that contained about \$304 million in cuts. There were many painful cuts, including laying off 100 state police troopers, 4 percent cut to legislative budgets, a \$41 million cut to revenue sharing for local governments, about \$58 million in cuts to various health programs contained in the Department of Community Health Budget, and a 4-percent cut to the majority of department budgets. To view a summary of the Executive Order, check out the following link:

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/sfa/main/ExecutiveOrder2009-22.pdf>. Additional cuts are also being discussed for the upcoming fiscal year budgets.

In light of these difficult economic and budget times, reforms are necessary to help protect important programs that residents of Michigan need. As a result, I have introduced legislation that would consolidate all elections to an annual August primary and November general election date. We cannot afford to waste taxpayer money by holding multiple election days with little voter turnout. For example, voter turnout in the City of Detroit mayoral election held on May 5 was about 15 percent. According to the Macomb County Clerk's Office, turnout in Macomb County was about 9.7 percent (<http://www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice/ElectionDept.htm>). By consolidating election days, I believe it will save local governments and school districts an estimated \$8 million while also avoiding "stealth elections" that are unhealthy for democracy.

MSU EXTENSION PROGRAM OFFERS HELP TO TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT MONEY

Interested in learning fun and interactive ways to teach your child about money? The Macomb County MSU Extension (MSUE) is offering a free "Money Smart from the Start" class to teach parents of 3-8 year-olds about the importance of money and saving for the future.

Participants will learn about fun, interactive, and age-appropriate games, books, and activities to help children better understand the concepts of money, saving, and spending.

The program runs from 6-8:30 p.m. Thursday, May 21, at the MSUE offices, 21885 Dunham Rd. (near entrance E), in Clinton Township. Registration is required. For more information or to register, call #586-469-7614.

MICHIGAN RESIDENTS CAN NOW APPLY FOR NEW ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENSE

The Michigan Secretary of State's Office recently announced that Michigan residents can now apply for the new enhanced driver's license (EDL). The dual-purpose EDL will serve as a driver's license and a border crossing card, which will allow travelers to meet the tougher federal document requirements that go into effect at the country's borders on June 1.

The EDL will cost \$45 and an enhanced state identification card will cost \$30. Applicants will receive them in two to three weeks. Possession of either card will eliminate the need to carry multiple documents when returning to the United States from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, or the Caribbean.

The EDL can be obtained at any Secretary of State SUPER! Center or other select branches. People with a current valid license will only need to show proof of a valid Social Security number and U.S. citizenship in addition to their driver's license. EDLs are voluntary, and residents can still receive standard driver's licenses and state identification cards. For more information on how to obtain an

enhanced driver's license go to: http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1627_8669_53333---.00.html or visit www.michigan.gov/sos.

FREE RX CARD

The Michigan Retailers Association is offering a new program that would help people save money on prescription drugs. The Free Rx Card is available and free to everyone, with no age, income or other eligibility requirements. Cardholders will be able to receive discounts averaging 35 percent off the cost of a prescription, with savings of up to 75 percent off generic prescriptions.

More than 2,000 pharmacies in Michigan-including all major chains and many independents- are participating in the program. Anyone can obtain a card by visiting the Michigan Retailers Association website at http://www.retailers.com/memberservices/rxcard_form.html and downloading a card. The website also can be used to locate a nearby participating pharmacy and to determine the discounted price.

In addition, Pfizer Inc. announced earlier this week a new program to provide free medicine for newly unemployed residents and their families. The program is open for enrollment through December 31, 2009 and applies to people who have become unemployed since January 1, 2009, prescribed and taking a Pfizer medicine for at least 3 months prior to becoming unemployed and enrolling in the program, lack prescription drug coverage and can attest to financial hardship. For more information, please contact Pfizer at #1-866-706-2400 or by visiting their website at www.PfizerHelpfulAnswers.com.

MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ISSUES CONSUMER ALERT ON AVAILABLE CREDITS

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) has issued a consumer alert on credits that electric customers may be eligible for after experiencing lengthy or frequent electric outages. Under certain conditions, residential customers could receive a \$25 credit. Commercial and other customers also have credits available to them based on their minimum bill. In all cases, customers should contact their electric utility to request the credit.

The MPSC's service quality and reliability standards include rules providing for outage service credits. Under these rules, there are three types of outage conditions that may qualify for a credit: catastrophic condition outages, normal condition outages, and frequent outages. Details on the rules are available in the consumer alert, available on the MPSC's website: www.michigan.gov/mpscalerts.com (click on electric).

2009 STATEWIDE CONSTRUCTION MAPS NOW AVAILABLE

The annual state highway construction map is now available from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The free guide, called "Paving the Way", is updated each year to help motorists locate major road and bridge projects across the state. The 2009 map will be available at MDOT's Transportation Service Centers and region offices, as well as at Travel Michigan's Welcome Centers. The map is also available for viewing at state rest areas.

Information on the map is current at the time of printing. Motorists are also encouraged to check MDOT's frequently updated list of lane closures on the web at <http://www.michigan.gov/drive>. The website features an interactive map showing current and planned construction projects throughout the state, as well as images from traffic cameras in their area.

To request copies of "Paving the Way", contact the MDOT Office of Communications in Lansing at #(517) 373-2160.

Coffee Hours

*In response to requests from constituents, I have added coffee hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

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| June 29 1:30-2:30 p.m. Senator Switalski's District Office (31513 Gratiot, Suite B) Roseville | July 27 7-8 p.m. Clinton-Macomb Public Library (35891 South Gratiot) Clinton Township |
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Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times-check local listings
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

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